



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

RECOLLECTIONS AND LETTERS OF GRANT.

PART II.

FROM Rome, Italy, March 25, 1878 I received from General Grant a letter of eight pages, from which the following extracts are taken :

“MY DEAR ADMIRAL:

“I have received three interesting letters from you since my last to you. You must excuse this, and continue to write, because I am always glad to receive your letters, as are all our family, and they all read them; and then, too, I am writing to so many persons that I cannot be prompt in my replies. The winter's trip has been the most pleasant of my life. It has been entirely outside the usual course of travelers abroad, and has opened a new field. . . . The officers without exception were agreeable, and did all they could to make us feel at home. Captain Robeson, the commander, was most attentive both to his guests and to his duties. I judge a more safe commander of a ship could not be found. The second officer, Lieutenant Caldwell, is a very superior man in education and acquirements, and especially so in all scientific subjects, and professional ones too. He is very much such a man as General Comstock who served on my staff, and whom you remember! If you don't remember him, you do his horse, at least. . . .”

The reader will be able to appreciate the sly humor of the General when informed that I knew General Comstock for years, both before and when he was with General Grant. During the winter of 1866 I rode a very powerful gray horse of his to Silver Springs, to pay a visit to F. P. Blair. The horse was very restive, and, going out, his perspiration so softened the reins that they would slip through my fingers. Coming into the city, he ran away with me three times, and would have broken my neck had I not been a good rider. The story of this ride, as told by me to Mr. Blair and General Grant, afforded them great amusement; indeed, I have no recollection of seeing General Grant laugh so heartily as when the story of the ride was recounted, which he called for from time to time. To resume, the General writes :

“But my impressions of peoples are, that in the East they have a form of

government and a civilization that will always repress progress and development. Syria and Asia Minor are as rich of soil as the great North-west in our own country, and are blessed with a climate far more suitable to production. The people would be industrious if they had encouragement, but they are treated as slaves, and all they produce is taken from them for the benefit of the governing classes, and to maintain them in a luxurious and licentious life. Women are degraded even beneath a slave. They have no more rights than the brute; in fact, the donkey is their superior in privileges.

"I was in Constantinople at a very interesting time historically. The Russian army was but a few miles outside, and there was no barrier to their entrance. But the stolidity of the people is such that in the five days I spent in Constantinople I should never have discovered of the people—outside of the Sultan and a few of the high officials—that anything unusual had happened."

He spent some days at Athens, and expresses great sympathy for the Greeks. Writing of Athens, he says :

"Considering that there was not a house where the present city stands forty-five years ago, and that the opposition of the Turks has kept them from communication with the balance of Europe except by sea, they have certainly made wonderful progress. I hope they may have their territory increased as one of the effects of the present war, so as to give them more Greek population, more area, and a full chance to develop. It seems to me England and the balance of Europe, except Russia, is interested in seeing such a consummation. . . ."

From St. Petersburg, Russia, he writes six pages, mostly in regard to his own private matters, and of something that had been published respecting them. Although, of course, entirely proper to publish, those parts are passed over. He writes :

"I do not remember where my last letter to you was from. Since leaving Paris, however, I have traveled through Holland, North Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and a portion of Russia. The 'New York Herald,' which comes by the same mail as your letter, gives an account of a portion of my visit to Germany. The statement is given very correctly, though, from comments I see in other papers, the correspondent has fallen into some errors in regard to what I said about military matters. I never said, for instance, that my loss from the Rapidan to the James River, including killed, wounded, and missing, was less than 40,000—that 39,000 would cover the whole. What I did say was, that, since Taylor's and Welles' letters, the public seem to have fallen into the idea that I had lost 100,000 men in getting to the south side of the James, where I could have gone by boat without loss, and ignore the fact that Lee sustained any loss. . . . But it is only just to the 'Herald' correspondent to say that I have not seen his letter, but only the criticism of the 'New York World.' Probably he has been correct in his statement. I have seen his Berlin letter, sent I think from Hamburg, giving an account of the receptions, dinners, review, Bismarck conference, etc., and they are correctly stated. There might be some question about the propriety of some things stated, but

they are nevertheless correct as far as my memory could verify them. I hope I will find the other letter equally correct.

"I have been very much pleased with the people in Holland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland. They are a free, intelligent, honest, and industrious people. My reception among them was most cordial, as indeed it has been everywhere. Here in Russia I have been surprised at the cordiality, though there has always existed a traditional friendship between the two countries. To-morrow we start for Warsaw; from thence to Vienna. We will rest in Austria until about the right season for visiting Spain and Portugal. Then I will have been in every country in Europe, in Egypt and Africa, and a little bit of Syria and Asia Minor; not much for an 'old tar,' but a good deal for a landsman. . . ."

From Gibraltar, November 15, 1878, the General writes :

"On my arrival here, three days ago, I found your letter of the 21st of October, and the very kind letter of the Secretary of the Navy, tendering to me the use of the 'Richmond' for an eastern tour. I wrote to the Secretary at once, and said that I should have cabled, only that I had previously sent a message to you saying that I had determined on not going home by way of China and Japan, at least for this winter, and that no doubt you had communicated the message. I received your previous letter of the 15th of October also. It seems a long journey to go from here to San Francisco by water for so little as there is to see along the coasts. If I were alone, or with a party of gentlemen that could penetrate the interior of countries passed through, I would not hesitate.

"We came here, making our first stop in Spain at Victoria. The young King, hearing that I was on my way to Madrid, invited me to stop there, where he was inspecting and reviewing some 26,000 troops. I stopped two days. The Spanish troops make a splendid appearance. The next stop was at Madrid, for a week. Madrid is improving rapidly, and has evidently improved much in the past few years. It is now a beautiful city, with horse-cars running to every part. I saw but little evidence of improvement, however, elsewhere than in Madrid. It is hard to foretell the future of Spain. The people are good enough, if, as you say, they could get any return for their labor. But as it is, there seems to be no integrity among the ruling class. Those who do work receive but the barest subsistence. If a man raises a pig he cannot kill and eat it without paying equivalent to five dollars of our money. The revenue officers are so abundant that there is no chance of escaping any tax except by bribery, which is resorted to to the extent of depriving the government of a very large percentage of its revenues. There is the greatest discontent, and the least thing would start a revolution."

From Peking, China, June 6, 1879, the General writes :

"MY DEAR ADMIRAL :

"I have now been in Peking three days, and have seen all there is of this forsaken city. Since our arrival we have received an American mail, and with it your two letters of the 6th and 17th of April. I am delighted that you consented to be our representative at the Congress [in Paris] to discuss the ques-

tion of the Interoceanic Canal, because I do not believe there is another American who understands the relative advantages of the one feasible route over all others, nor who can state the advantages and obstacles in the way of other routes as clearly as you can. . . .

"I have found China and the Chinese much as you have often described it and them. It is not a country nor a people calculated to invite the traveler to make a second visit. But they are a people of wonderful shrewdness and industry, and are rapidly monopolizing the trade, as carriers, merchants, mechanics, market gardeners, and servants, from Bombay eastward. Then, too, their leading men seem to have a thorough appreciation of the necessity for internal improvement, such as railroads, etc., but have a horror of introducing them with foreign capital and under foreign control. Their idea seems to be rather to educate a sufficient number of their own young men abroad to fit them as engineers, machinists, soldiers, sailors, etc., and then to make their improvements with their own men and means. My belief is, that, in less time from now, than the half century since you and I first went to J. D. White's school in Georgetown, elapses, Europe will be complaining of the too rapid advance of China. . . ."

From Tokio, Japan, the General wrote very interesting letters, the first dated July 16, the last August 7, from which I quote :

"Your letter of the 2d of July reached me a few days since. After two days' reflection on your suggestion of the part I should take, or consent to take, if offered, in the matter of the Interoceanic Canal *via* Nicaragua, I telegraphed to the Secretary of the Navy, Washington : 'Tell Ammen approve—Grant.' I hope you received the dispatch. On the 27th, two weeks after this leaves Yokohama, we sail for San Francisco.

"I do not feel half as anxious to get home as I did eighteen months ago. There is no country that I have visited, however, this side of Europe, except Japan, where I would care to stay longer than to see the points of greatest interest. But Japan is a most interesting country, and the people are quite as much so. The changes that have taken place here are more like a dream than a reality. They have a public school system extending over the entire empire, affording facilities for a common school education to every child, male and female. They have a military and a naval academy that compare well with ours in course taught, discipline, and attainment of the students. They have colleges at several places in the empire on the same basis of instruction as our best institutions. They have a school of science which I do not believe can be beat in any country. Already the great majority of their professors—even in teaching European languages—are natives, most of them educated in the very institutions where they are now teaching. But I hope soon to see you, and then I will say more than I care to write in the limit of a letter. . . ."

From San Francisco, California, September 28, 1879, the General writes:

"We arrived here on the 20th, after a most pleasant and smooth sail of

nineteen days from Yokohama. . . . I do not know the present prospects of the Inter-oceanic Canal. I approve, however, what you have done in the matter, and if the people of the United States will take hold of the Nicaragua route in earnest, the only practicable route comparatively, I will give all the aid in my power. . . . I shall not start east before about the 27th of November. Even then I do not expect to go east of Chicago before the holidays, but if I could do any good for the canal enterprise by doing so, I would go earlier. . . ."

There was a change, however. General Grant reached Philadelphia early in December, and was good enough to write one of our friends in common, and myself, to meet him. Never have I seen such an extraordinary demonstration as his reception on that occasion. Arriving an hour or so after it commenced, several hours passed before we could reach the hotel, by reason of a procession miles in length. Were it possible for such things to have "turned his head," he would have been bereft of reason. Although we sat when we dined at the hotel at a private table with the General, it was quite impossible to have any intelligent conversation on the important matter of a ship canal. The discussion was adjourned until he could come to Washington some time thereafter. At the latter place, meeting a Senator in the confidence of General Grant, the Senator inquired why we were interfering with General Grant in favor of the Nicaragua Canal. They wanted him for the Presidency, and we should let him alone. I said :

"Senator, there are a great many who would make good Presidents, you among the number ; I will be glad to vote for you if nominated, but General Grant only, in my belief, can speedily bring about the construction of the Nicaragua Canal, so important to our National interests. Why do you not let him alone to do it ?"

General Grant had in the mean time been prevailed upon to go to Mexico to forward the inception of railroads, no doubt greatly to the conjoint interests of the two peoples, nationally and otherwise ; but this was the merest pigmy in result, beyond a doubt, if compared with opening the Nicaragua Canal, and securing on the Isthmus a moral and material control of American interests, in lieu of European interests, so clearly expressed in the closing sentence of his published article on the canal question, hereinafter quoted.

I am aware that when in Washington about the 1st of January, 1880, General Grant received discouragement at the State Depart-

ment. This I know from a conversation with him immediately after a two hours' visit to the Secretary of State. Thereafter, we found General Grant well disposed towards the Nicaragua Canal, but, so far as I know, he was in no degree active to bring about its construction. After a little sojourn in Florida and on the Island of Cuba, he went to Mexico, no doubt paving the way to the promotion of mutual national interests, and brought about, as he has done wherever he has gone, a more kindly feeling, and one of more intimacy and confidence between those in power.

Indifferent in a great degree as to parties and their dominancy, and ignorant of other than what seems to me national interests in the broad sense of the term, I trust that gentlemen who are learned in such matters, and the well-meaning public of whatever party, will pardon a few remarks on questions which I frankly admit have not seriously engaged my attention.

Had not circumstances, partly apparent to all, served as a prevention, there are substantial reasons for believing that General Grant would have taken positive action looking to the construction of the Nicaragua Canal, and that a fair statement, laid before the American people, would have brought superabundant capital to execute a work that, even with very low rates of tolls, would be remunerative to a degree; and, by reason of its relative economy of construction, actually freed from any possible rivalry. How glorious might have been the final days of General Grant had he not swerved from his intended purpose, as expressed in his telegram from Japan, and explicitly reiterated in his letters from San Francisco and Chicago. Even now, the water-way for the traffic of the world across this continent might be an accomplished fact—a grand work and fitting monument would it have been, through all ages; a proper culminant for the life of this man of grand ideas and unsullied purpose.

What is known now as to final location would have been established in 1880, had the work been taken in hand at that time. Bounteous Nature has extended Lake Nicaragua to within twelve miles of the Pacific coast. From the lake, following a line of seventeen and one-quarter miles in length, admirably located to effect surface drainage, with only one cut of forty-one feet in depth, the rudimentary harbor of Brito is reached. Looking to the eastward, over the magnificent sheet of water known as Lake Nicaragua, its surface lying only one hundred and ten feet

above the level of the sea, we find the outlet of the superfluous waters, known as the river San Juan. In strong and steady volume it flows onward towards the Atlantic, its waters clear as crystal, unvexed at all times by floods. Should Nature have brought it as an estuary to within less than twenty miles of Graytown and yet interposed no cuts of great depths, leaving to man to complete the water-ways from sea to sea, where is the dolt who could not see that these water-ways would be made, and soon too, whether by us or by others? This eastern extension of summit level exists as an actuality only in part, but can be made practically a reality by the expenditure of a sum certainly not exceeding eight millions of dollars.

The connection by canalization of this magnificent summit level, extending so nearly from sea to sea, has not an opposing obstacle or difficulty, in the engineering sense of the word. Labor only, and that almost wholly mechanical, is requisite, and that too in as healthy an intertropical country as is known, possessing, in addition, exceptional advantages to ensure satisfactory sanitary conditions throughout, from sea to sea. Of no value whatever would it be to endeavor to trace the influences and the pitfalls by which General Grant was beset and diverted from a cherished purpose, indicated in what has been presented and ably stated in his article on the Nicaragua Canal published in the *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* of February, 1881. The closing paragraph is as follows :

"I have formed the opinions expressed in this article, not from a hasty consideration of the subject, and not without personal observation. While commanding the army of the United States, my attention was drawn to the importance of the water communication I have here discussed. During my administration of the government, I endeavored to impress upon the country the views I then formed; and I shall feel that I have added one more act of my life to those I have already recorded, if I shall succeed in impressing upon Congress and the people the high value, as a commercial and industrial enterprise, of this great work, which, if not accomplished by Americans, will undoubtedly be accomplished by some of our rivals in power and influence."

Throughout the entire article from which the above is taken the intelligent reader will find a wealth of wisdom and of suggestion, closing with the special warning of the consequences which will arise from neglect. Will the legislators of the American people heed it?

The reader may well suppose that the package of letters, ex-

tracts from which have now been made public for the first time, was put away with an indescribable feeling of sadness. Persons who knew General Grant slightly, and others who never met him, may form from these papers a more definite idea of some of his thoughts and his life, without disguises or concealment. Personally, his wants were of the simplest. Even before his voyage around the world, the ordinary use of liquors, or even of the lightest wines, had been laid aside. To him personally, the plainest house, with abundant light and air, and furnished in the plainest manner, would have been as acceptable as a palace.

I have only seen in other persons a rudimentary development of what has seemed to me for years his most remarkable trait: an apparent absence of a feeling of resentment toward those who had maligned and injured him, either through a blind prejudice, or maliciously, to promote their own ends. Let the reader consider whether he knows a single human being, high in position, strong in will, clear in object, and honest in purpose, who has risen to this perfection.

Personal recollections, given in a magazine, should not be diverted into other eulogiums to swell the countless number that meet the eye at home and from abroad. Grant's travels had made him akin to all peoples, as the reader may see even in the brief extracts from letters hastily written by him as he journeyed. His trials of his last fifteen months, which came upon him as suddenly as a clap of thunder, have justly excited the compassion of the whole world; the surrounding facts are so astounding that they actually seem incredible. No one who was ever near General Grant would conceive for a moment that he would have intentionally wronged a human being. His sorrows became the sorrows of humanity around the wide world. Glorious instinct of the human heart that makes all men akin!

No former associate of General Grant would be so unjust to his memory as not to recognize the fact that he had an ambition far above all suspicion. His ambition, above all, was to do what was right. It was engraven on his soul; it was evidenced in every act of his life, from the cradle to the grave.

No more baseless, senseless cries ever vexed the land, and the ears of those who knew General Grant well, than "the danger of the third term;" that "if he ever got into the White House he would never leave it alive." Nor were these senseless cries believed

save by a certain number who seem to believe everything that is uttered vehemently. In the Southern States those who had fought against him, and, on previous elections, either voted against him or had refrained from voting, which was largely the case, had laid aside life-long prejudices, and were more than any others inwardly longing for his nomination. They had, in fact, firmly resolved to support him. A gentleman of high position in the South, who had fought against General Grant, and had refrained from voting when he was a candidate, wrote me confidentially, desiring to know whether he would be a candidate before the convention at Chicago. He asserted most earnestly that, if a candidate, many thousands of men of influence and position would break away from the support of any candidate the Democratic party might name.

It is well known to the public that General Grant had no admirer more ardent than Alexander H. Stephens, of Georgia, and it will be admitted that he was a power in himself throughout the South. Shortly after the termination of the proceedings that placed Mr. Hayes in the Presidential chair, Mr. Stephens told me that many excited Southerners came to him demanding to know what Grant meant by bringing troops to Washington. Was it his purpose to seat Mr. Hayes? "Not at all," said Mr. Stephens; "General Grant intends to prevent disorder, and to suppress anarchy, if in his power, should it be necessary." Already it seems forgotten that we owe the memory of General Grant great reverence for his unheralded acts on that occasion. It was a very painful and critical condition. Had a civil war once begun on the right of succession to the Presidency, no human being can say when it would have terminated and what would have been the resulting consequences. It is not at all unlikely that it would have been more bloody and more deplorable than the one lately passed through; for, in the Middle, Western and Northern States, at least, it would have been neighbor against neighbor. The strife would have unloosed the worst elements of society. Thankful we may be that General Grant was equal to the occasion, as Chief Magistrate, in what we may well regard as a fearful crisis.

When it was a question of the nomination for a third term, we may believe without a doubt that, had his political friends been willing to take up any other candidate that would have been generally acceptable, General Grant would have been grateful for this action, even though he might be possessed of a thorough con-

viction that, if nominated, his election would be a foregone conclusion. He must have known that a very large number of his former political enemies in the Southern States were actually longing for his nomination, to enable them to give him an immense spontaneous support.

Early in the fall of 1884, a gentleman of Washington received an invitation from General Grant, then in New York, to accompany him up the Hudson River. On the return of this gentleman, he informed me confidentially of the supposed gravity of the ailment of the general. Some months later, the daily papers contained contradictory notices of his condition, and even when the inexorable hand of death was upon him there were cheery reports of his recovery; then for months messages of grief and pain flew to the four quarters of the globe, and when the sands of life were almost run, as did the brave Manrique of Spanish fame, the dying general may well have said :

“ O Death, no more, no more delay ;
My spirit longs to fly away,
And be at rest ;
The will of Heaven my will shall be—
I bow to the divine decree,
To God's behest.”

Death came at last, and the weary body was at rest. Then were heard solemn requiems throughout this broad land, and far beyond, around the wide world, wherever were the habitations of civilized men, again were heard the solemn anthems; beneath the venerable roofs of ages, through the long dark aisles of saintly places, among the tombs of the great and long-departed, the echoes lingered long in their solemn reverberations. Now they have died away, and their memory is joined to the long procession of the venerated past.

DANIEL AMMEN.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *August 10, 1885.*